



## Pediatric Environmental Health, 2nd edition

by Ruth A. Etzel and Sophie J. Balk, eds.  
Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003. 721 pp.  
ISBN: 1-58110-111-2, \$44.95 paper.

In 1999 the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released its "Green Book" or *Pediatric Environmental Health*. This unique resource synthesized information on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of environmentally related illness in children. Just four years later, in November 2003, the second edition was released. Expanded by 75%, representing

updated original chapters and 10 new chapters, this new "Green Book" reflects the rapid growth in scientific advances and general and medical community interest in these topics. This contribution continues to stand out, oriented to helping clinicians put environmental health into their routine practice of caring for children.

Most environmental illnesses are not pathognomonic, and most children affected by environmental exposures do not present to specialists. Coupled with the fact that most pediatricians and others who care for children receive limited preparation in environmental health in the current medical school and residency curriculum, the potential for lack of problem recognition and appropriate intervention is concerning. The AAP Committee on Environmental Health, under the editorial direction of Ruth Etzel and associate editor Sophie J. Balk, recognize the critical role children's health care providers play in *a*) discerning the potential environmental etiology of symptoms or disease, *b*) responding to patients' questions that arise from the increasing barrage of new messages in the media regarding environmental risks, and *c*) providing reliable, scientifically sound preventive messages regarding environmental exposures.

The editors' response is a concise yet increasingly comprehensive, practical guide that provides readily accessible information to the busy

clinician. Background information clarifies the appropriate integration of environmental health into regular practice. For example, a toxicity review describes the scientific basis for the unique vulnerabilities of children at various stages of development, paralleling the typical developmental orientation to health assessment that is familiar to clinicians who evaluate children. "How to Take an Environmental History" provides a primer on the relevant questions that can guide appropriate anticipatory guidance during well child visits or raise the index of suspicion for environmental etiology during illness or symptom-related visits.

Twenty-two specific chemical and physical hazards—such as air pollutants, lead, mercury, pesticides, water pollutants, endocrine disruptors, and radon—are addressed in their own evidence-based review chapters. In addition, specific chapters are devoted to special environments (e.g., child care settings, schools, waste sites, workplaces) and complex situations (e.g., arts and crafts, asthma, multiple chemical sensitivities).

Each chapter includes frequently asked questions and responses, underscoring important points and providing models of patient risk communication. New chapters cover arsenic, gasoline and its additives, irradiation of food, nickel/manganese/chromium, preconceptional and prenatal exposures, chemical/biological terrorism, nontherapeutic use of antibiotics in animal agriculture, environmental threats to children's health in developing countries, environmental health advocacy, and risk assessment and risk management.

Primarily geared toward physicians, the new chapters and well-organized framework also make the revised *Pediatric Environmental Health* potentially useful to nurses, public health advisors, teachers, parents, and advocates who desire ready access to specific topics. Its expansion has not diminished its strength as a portable, affordable, and uniquely clinically relevant reference.

CATHERINE KARR

Catherine Karr is a board-certified pediatrician with an MS in Environmental Health/Toxicology and nearing completion of a PhD in Epidemiology. She serves as primary consultant for the University of Washington Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit. Her current research focuses on ambient air pollution and infant respiratory health.

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